AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF Captain *M-----n.*

BODLEIANA BIBLIOTHECA

BEING

REMARKS on the MINUTES of the Court-Martial, and other incidental Matters.

Humbly Addreſſed to the Honourable Houſe of Commons.

By a SEA-OFFICER.

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AN ENQUIRY INTO Capt. M——N's Conduct, &c.

THERE was a time, though it be somewhat beyond the Reach of most of our Memories, when a *British* Ship of War would have refused almost no Odds; when our Fleets, numerous or few, never refused to engage with the Enemy, was the Difference never so great, the Weather never so boisterous, the Reason of the thing at first sight never so disadvantagious; we, as *Cæsar* phrases it, came, saw, and conquered, the Honour of *England* then distended itself like the Light of the Sun, and equally influenced the Politicks of the Earth, as the Sun its Products. We were in those Days so far from refusing to fight an Enemy at Odds, when we met them, that it was but to know, there were such to be found, and at all Events to engage them. Thus Admiral *Blake*, with only eighteen Ships, scorned to be braved in the *Downes*, by dou-

ble his Number; and judging very truly, that it was of much leſs Conſequence to the Nation, to loſe the Ships under his Command, in a bold and gallant Action, than that even the braveſt Enemy we ever had, ſhould preſume to inſult us on our own Coaſts, he behaved himſelf as every Sea-Officer ought on the like Occaſion, made a deſperate puſh, and had at once both the Honour and Happineſs to come off ſucceſsful.

It has been ſaid to be a Rule in the Navy, that one of our Ships of War, ſhould not refuſe fighting two of her equal Force, but might run from three; this Rule has no Eſtabliſhment in our Laws, but is very well eſtabliſhed in Honour and Reaſon, it being well underſtood by every experienced Seaman, that two Ships againſt one, are not the great Odds, which at firſt Sight they ſeem to be, the ſingle Ship being thrown into a proper Diſpoſition, and being ſufficiently mann'd. To explain this here, would not only be leading the Reader away from the main Point, but alſo be too prolix to be included in theſe Sheets; the Inference I would immediately make from it is only this; That if one *Britiſh* Ship of War is obliged in Honour to fight two of the Enemy's of equal Force, ſhe is at leaſt obliged to fight one of her equal Force.

I muſt likewiſe beg Leave to conclude, that when our Ships meet with thoſe of the Enemy at Sea, the Weather is very probably as good for one as the other, and although there will be ſometimes much Difference in Ships, as ſome being ſtiffer, ſome cranker, yet when they come to engage, as the chiefeſt part of their Sails are taken in, they will both be ſufficiently upright in the Water to fight their Lower-Deck Guns, ſuppoſing they carry ſixty or upwards in the whole. What ſtiffens a Ship at the

the ſame time brings her down lower in the Water, and the Sails of a light Ship will probably overſet her if they bring her down below thoſe Bearings, which a loaded Ship is brought to by her Cargo and Sails; on the other Side a light Ship will, for very obvious Reaſons, make as good way as a loaded Ship, though ſhe carries but two thirds the Quantity of Canvaſs. It is further to be obſerved, that Ships coming from the *Weſt-Indies*, are much fouler, than ſuch as are out on ſhort Cruiſes, and conſequently require more Canvaſs to puſh them with equal Velocity through the Water. It is likewiſe true, that our *Britiſh* Ships of War, under good Management, and on equal Terms, ſail as well as the *French*, are as ſtiff as they, and have ſhewn themſelves ſuperior in both Caſes, when inclin'd to run away, and the ſame when in earneſt to fight; and therefore taking all things together, that Officer makes a wretched Defence, who has only to ſay that his Ship lies more than the Enemy. The Reaſons beſides the preceding are, the Enemy will either fight him running or brought too; if running, and he ſails beſt, and is to Windward, then are his Lee Upper-Deck Guns capable of playing upon the Enemy to great Advantage, as on his Bow or Quarter, at his Maſts and Rigging, or pointed into his Bottom, and can point more Guns upon the Enemy from one Tier, than the Enemy on him from two, beſides that the Enemy cannot fix any Shot ſo low in his Bottom, but what on righting, are quite out of the Water; theſe Advantages then are very obvious in favour of the Windermoſt, and beſt ſailing Ship in a running Fight. And if both bring too, then are both near equally upright, and being of equal Force, are then on a Parity in the Engagement.

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The Reader may (independant of the technical Terms, which I cannot well avoid using) plainly enough discover how far this kind of reasoning affects the Affair in question, more of this will appear in the proper Place, and less could not well have been said, and the Reader enabled clearly to understand it.

I shall now consider the Evidence in due order, which are all of a Tone, and to a Court-Martial not willing, or perhaps able to ask any other Questions, but such as a prepar'd Evidence were instructed to answer, their Determination, at first Sight, seems well enough; but examined into, it will, I conceive, appear, that the Court-Martial either knew, or desired to know, as little as the Delinquent did to act.

I must further premise here, that I shall not enter into the general Evidence concerning two of the four Ships, unless when the same is involved with the other two, if that any-where happens; and as it is impossible for me to directly contradict the Facts, other than by shewing the impossibility of their being true, so neither shall I, in general, question their Truth, but only shew, that supposing them true, they are not well enough concerted to answer the Purpose for which they were published, or to satisfy any knowing and impartial Judicature.

"First Mr. *Mac Donald* gives you the Bearing of "the Enemy about N E, and the Wind nearly South, "this I suppose is at first seeing them," from whence the Reader is to understand they were to the Leeward, and consequently to be chased at Advantage, and which was accordingly pursued as it ought to be.

"Mr. *Joseph Mead* produces the Logg-Book, and "reads the Logg for the 7th and 8th Instant, from "whence it appears, that the *Hampton-Court* carried "her Top-Gallant Sails, and was a-Breast to Wind-"ward of the two *French* Ships at half an Hour past "nine

' nine o'Clock in the Evening, that they haul'd up ' their Main-Sails, and the *Hampton-Court* did the ' same. They soon after set their Main-Sails, and ' small Sails, the *Hampton-Court* did the same.'

Being ask'd, ' Whether the two Ships lay along ' like the *Dreadnought* and *Hampton-Court*? Believes ' they did not lye along at all, or very little, that their ' Lower-Deck Lee-Ports were open, and had their ' Guns out.'

From hence the Reader is to learn, that by both Ships having their small Sails set, the Weather must be very moderate, that by their Ships lying along they were upon a Wind, and by their being to Windward, and a-breast of the Enemy, they could not see whether their Lee-Lower Tier of Guns were out or not, and indeed for all that is sworn, is it possible they were; since they had no use for them on that Side, and with so much Sail standing, made it hazardous without being of any use; which makes one very much doubt both the Veracity of the above, and various other Evidence who say the same thing, for the Logg-Book says it was squally Weather; and therefore might hazard sinking the Ship, and indeed is in the Whole so wretchedly put together, as requires being better clear'd up to a Seaman. ' Mr. ' *Macdonald* the previous Evidence declares, they ' were within Musket-shot of the Enemy and there ' half an Hour: that the Enemy made Sail a-head; ' and that the *Hampton-court* after a Consultation, ' drop't a-stern to speak with the *Dreadnought*, con- ' cluding they must not fight without her, and that ' the *Dreadnought* could not have come up, because ' the *Frenchmen* having clapt on a Wind, out-bore ' them with Sail.'

The Questions that lead to those Answers are seen by the Answers themselves, and the thorough Dis-

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cuſſions muſt appear when we have got it all pretty well together; at preſent it is neceſſary to conſider what Queſtions ought to have been ask'd. As for Example: You were to Windward of the Enemy, and concluded not to fight her, until the *Dreadnought* came up; this we conceive aroſe from the Duty you owed to his Majeſty and your Country, by taking care not to loſe a Ship; but pray, Sir, as you were to Windward, and conſequently could leave the Enemy at Pleaſure, Would it have been amiſs to have tried a few Shot, perhaps you might have diſabled the Enemy; and as they would not have engaged you without ſhortening Sail; Would you not in both theſe Caſes have had a fair Chance to have ſtopt at leaſt one of them, until your Conſort came up?

Its very true, that you ſay that even your Upper-Deck Guns would not carry far, laid down in their Carriages; that is indeed very ſtrange in a Seventy-Gun Ship, heretofore concluded a very ſtiff Ship; but admitting it to be true, Had you no Quarter-Deck nor Fore-Caſtle Guns to fire? ſure a little Experiment could not have done any Harm? As ſuch Queſtions as theſe naturally occur'd to a Marine Judicature, I don't doubt but you were aſked them; and the Nation wants to know what were your Anſwers, for they cannot readily conceive how you could be within Muſket-ſhot, as ſome, half Muſket-ſhot as others ſay, for half an Hour without your Blood boiling into a Ferment to be at Work, and at laſt to deſire, to know of the *Dreadnought* whether you ſhould fight, and to have all that Way to get up again, when your firſt Lieutenant ſays the *Frenchman* out-bore you with Sail when you were up with them, and yet that you could gain on them again after you had ſpoke to the *Dreadnought*, and that you could not fight them at laſt, is really perfectly incompre-

henſible

henſible to us Seamen, and to the Land-men looks a little like Magic in the Enemy, who charm'd you here and there, and did juſt whatever they pleaſed with you.

The next Evidence is one Mr. *Trant*, who being ſecond Lieutenant, and inſtead of ſaying leſs, according to his Poſt, riſes in Proportion to his Inferiority, and ſays, 'That when they were a-long-ſide of the 'Enemy, at about a Muſket-ſhot diſtance, their Lee-'Guns would not reach her.'

But pray, Sir, is not this ſome Quibble at the Bottom? will you tell your Brother Seamen, that when your Main-ſail was hawl'd up, you could not reach the Enemy with any of your Lee-Guns, becauſe your Ship lay along: If ſo, Pray how did ſhe lie when your Main-ſail was down, and your ſmall Sails ſet; really, Mr. *Trant*, this won't bear Water. Beſides, why are you ſo much wiſer than your firſt Lieutenant, in relation to judging of the Time that the *Dreadnought* would have been in coming up; he ſays modeſtly two or three Hours, you no leſs than ſix. You will well deſerve a Ship, if no Body goes beyond you, and a certain Noble L——d reſumes his former Dignity; for ſure St. *James*'s never bred ſo conſummate a Courtier. You gave your Advice not to fight, you ſay, becauſe the Enemy could employ more Guns, which is very poſſible, if you had none to fight. I dare ſay the *French* would have found ſome ——Now your next Lieutenant, I am afraid, Mr. *Claus*, was not in the Secret,——He ſays the *Dreadnought* was three Miles a-ſtern, and might have been up in two or three Hours.

Mr. *Irvine* ſeems to ſet her Diſtance at about three Miles, ſo that Mr. *Trant*, in the whole, has made his Advice and his Evidence perfectly well agree together.

It would be needleſs to puzzle the Reader with an

Extract of the Evidence at large, as he will have the Minutes before him when he reads this. The only two examined Officers remaining, are the Boatſwain, and Gunner, and the Enquiry of them is chiefly to learn whether they themſelves had done their Duty, and put the Ship in a Readineſs to engage and two better Evidences for that Purpoſe could hardly have been found. The Enquiry is much of the ſame Nature as is uſed in the Civil Government, in the Caſe of the Murther of a Baſtard Child; it is then enquired whether the Mother had provided for her Lying-in, which in caſe ſhe has, is Evidence in her Favour. Here a *Britiſh* Ship of War has murthered *Honour*, her natural Brat, the Inquiry is whether her Parents had provided Baby-clouts for her, which I don't doubt but they had, tho' they never deſigned ſhe ſhould ſurvive.

If all my Readers had heard as much as I of Sailors Evidence, or knew as well the Influence of a Sea Commander over his People, he would not in the leaſt wonder at what follows; it is the Evidence of two common Seamen, to wit. *Ralph Dicke*, and *William Valentine*. '*Ralph Dicke* was quartered 'at the Fore-maſt Gun upon Deck, and ſays, that 'the *Hampton-court* lay ſo along, that her Guns 'would not reach half Way to the Enemy, who 'was diſtant not a Mile.'

Now by this the Reader is to make his Computation, what they mean by the Diſtance of a Muſket-ſhot, which appears here to be near a Mile; its very true that a good Muſket will carry a Mile, tho' not to any Purpoſe; but had not this Mile come out here, the Reader would have imagined the Diſtance to have been about one Quarter, for every Body knows that even Cannon don't do much Execution at a Mile's Diſtance, from whence a fair Concluſion may be

be drawn, *viz.* That had the *Hampton court* been within a quarter of a Mile of the Enemy, the fartheſt off any Ship ought to fight her Guns, they then, according to their own Account, would have operated to Effect; and it hence appears why they would not reach the Enemy, as the Ship lay along, becauſe ſhe was at too great a Diſtance; and how far Mr. *Dicke*'s Evidence merits Regard, when he ſays immediately after, 'That had the Enemy been to 'Windward, as ſhe was to Leeward, the *Hampton-court*'s Guns would have been uſeleſs; for were the 'Breaches, raiſed never ſo high, the Shot thrown 'out of them muſt have gone over Maſt-heads of 'the Enemy's Ships.'

The Evidence muſt certainly mean by this, that ſuppoſing the Enemy at a Mile Diſtance, her Weather Upper-Deck Guns would have to operated; which is not perhaps very difficult to conceive, but is plainly nothing to the Purpoſe, and ſeems only introduced to ſhew how much the Ship lay along. But one would have expected from ſome of the Evidence as of themſelves, or that they would have been ask'd, whether there was no Diſpoſition wherein the Ship was capable of being put, whereby ſhe might fairly have engaged the Enemy.

'*William Valentine*, another Seaman, who was 'quartered at the ninth Gun upon Deck, *i. e.* Upper-'Deck, and is introduced to prove that the Lee-'Guns upon the ſame Deck would not carry twenty 'Yards clear of the Surface of the Water, when laid 'down in the Carriages, by Reaſon of the Ship's 'heeling, and on the other Side could only have 'fir'd into the Air.'

This Evidence cloſes the Whole of the *Hampton-court*'s People, and goes as far beyond his Brother *Dickie*, as Mr. *Trant* does beyond his firſt Lieute-

rant, and as far above Probability, as he is below having a due Regard to what he ſays, little dreaming that ſuch Evidence, and ſo little to the Purpoſe, would have ever ſeen the Light.

The laſt Evidence, as it eſpecially relates to the *Hampton court*, is a Priſoner of War, the Captain of the *Dartmouth*, which had been an *Engliſh* Privateer, taken by the two *French* Men of War, and was retaken by the *Captain* Man of War, Capt. *Griffin*, who followed her ſingly, while the *Hampton-court*, *Dreadnought*, and *Sunderland*, followed the two *French* Men of War, ſuppoſed to be Merchant Ships. The Name of this Evidence is *Ben. Chien*, who declares upon his Parole of Honour, 'That one of the 'French Ships was the *Neptune*, commanded by the 'Count *De Eſpings* of ſeventy-four Guns, and an 'Hundred and eighty Men: The other the *Fleuron*, 'commanded by the Count *De Gout* of ſixty-four 'Guns, and ſix Hundred Men;' and thereupon the Court Martial give their Judgment, 'That Captain '*M*——*n* is ſo far from being to blame, that the 'Court are unanimouſly of Opinion, that he did his 'Duty as an experienced good Officer, and as a Man 'of *Courage* and Conduct.' The reſt are by the ſame Court reſpectively juſtified, *viz.* Capt. *Griffin*, becauſe when he bore away, he judged that the two Ships in Chace were Merchant-Men; Capt. *Brett*, and Capt. *Fowke* becauſe they could not come up, which laſt has all the Appearance of being very true.

The Queſtion then which immediately follows is, Whether if Capt. *M*——*n* had ſtood nearer to the *Neptune* and engaged her, the *Dreadnought* and *Sunderland* would not probably have come up in good Time?

The next Queſtion is, Whether the *Hampton-court* could have been in any Danger of being taken by

by the two *French* Ships, even if she had been alone; but as her Consorts were one within three Miles, the other making the best of her Way up, though at a greater Distance, it was at all probable that the *Hampton-Court* could have engag'd them without much Hazard, until at least one of the other two came up to her Assistance, though it had been three Hours?

Whether if the *Hampton-Court* had bore down and engaged the Enemy near enough for her Guns to have taken Place, the Enemy would not in Course have haul'd up ther Lower-sails; to wit, their *Main-sail*, *Fore-sail*, and *Mizzen*, and taken in their Small sail? And, Whether the *Dreadnought* would not have probably been up in less than an Hour? And then, Whether the *Hampton-Court* ought to have made the Experiment by at least firing some Shot at the Enemy, which she could well have done when nearer?

I am sorry, in the first place, that I can't take at least some of the Evidence for granted, particularly that of *Lieutenant Trant*, and *William Valentine*, not as presuming them under Influence, or as making their Court to their Commander, but as not tallying well with the gross of the Evidence, and as the Lawyers say proving too much, as such kind of Proof seems to carry with it rather an intent to gain a Point, than to pursue the Truth, and is always to be avoided, where nothing but Truth is sought. It is in the whole as evident as Light, that let the Facts be exactly as the most sanguine have sworn, yet will they no ways justify the *Hampton-Court*'s not engageing with the Advantage of the Wind, for the *French* being to Leeward durst not have engaged with their lower Sails standing, for this single Reason, that on firing their weather Guns, part of the Wads, with

variety

variety of Sparks of Fire, would have blown back into the Ships, and hazarded the ſetting of them on Fire, which is the true Reaſon why even Ships in a running Fight, and to Leeward of the Enemy, either fire no Guns at all, or are obliged to haul up their Courſes, and fight running under their upper Sails; it will follow that either they would have haul'd up their Courſes, or not have fir'd at all; if they had haul'd up their Courſes, then the *Dreadnought* and *Sunderland* would have come up; If they had not, then would the *Hampton-Court* have had ſufficient Advantage of them, by employing her Guns towards diſabling them, without any hazard of being diſabled by them. For as both the Enemy's Ships haul'd cloſe upon a Wind, when the *Hampton-Court* was abreaſt of the Headmoſt, had the Sternmoſt fir'd, it would have been from her Bow, on the *Hampton-Court*'s Quarter, to Windward, which would have brought all the looſe Sparks into her own Boſom, and diſtributed them to the Main-ſail, as well as to the Foreſail, neareſt to which the Guns were fir'd from, and theſe are Remarks to which the *French* Sea Officers are not Strangers. And as to the Headmoſt Ship, although ſhe fired her Guns on a direct Line to Windward, as being abreaſt of the *Hampton-Court*, yet had ſhe fired any of her Guns before the Beam, the Sparks of looſe Fire would at leaſt have hazarded the firing of her Main-ſail, and conſequently of deſtroying the Ship, while on the other Side, the *Hampton-Court* would have run no kind of Hazard of the like Diſaſter, for her looſe Fire eſpecially, when near the Enemy, would rather have fallen on her, but could in no Senſe put the *Hampton-Court* under any kind of Hazard; it will plainly follow, that under theſe and ſome other Diſadvantages needleſs to add, that the *French* would

not

not have ſo engaged, conſequently would have ſhortned Sail by hauling up their Courſes; and in Conſequence thereof, the *Dreadnought* have had ſufficient time to have come up, and in Conſequence of her coming up, the *Sunderland* in due time alſo.

One is under a good deal of Diſadvantage in writing Tracts of this Nature, for if one enters into too nice a Diſquiſition, notwithſtanding moſt People think themſelves capable of judging on the Science of Sea fighting, yet very few, even amongſt Mariners, know much of the matter, and therefore to define it too nicely, by Lines and Angles, would be writing to the Satisfaction of very few, elſe would it more plainly appear why Mr. *M--n* ought to have fought the *French*, his only Diſadvantage when near, being the laying of his Decks open to the ſmall Shot of the Enemy, which is a good deal remedied by the Height of a Seventy-Gun Ship's Gunnells, and the Gang-ways running inwards parallel therewith, and covering the Men at the Guns, and as their Ship would have righted a good deal when the Courſes were haul'd up, ſo would the Decks have been proportionably leſs expoſed; beſides that Mr. *M--n* need not even have expoſed his Men at all, if he acted merely on the Principle of Conduct: for as it is very plain by their own Account, when taken together, that the *Hampton-Court* ſailed beſt, as very reaſonably ſhe ſhould, being a clean Ship, and the Enemy foul, ſhe might have play'd with them in ſuch a Diſpoſition as to have hazarded very little, and at leaſt had a Chance to have diſabled one of his Adverſaries; and had ſhe herſelf been diſabled, as the *Dreadnought* was but three Mile a-ſtern with the Wind of the Enemy, there could not have been any kind of hazard of loſing the Ship. Her lying along in the manner deſcribed, plainly intimates that

ſhe

ſhe was higher out of the Water than the Enemy, but as it may be ſaid, it does not neceſſarily follow, that a Ship muſt be higher becauſe ſhe is cranker than another, I muſt beg leave to make one Obſervation, from a very good Information come to my Hands, which is, That when Mr. *Balchen*, that truely brave gallant Officer, was unhappily loſt, the *Hampton-Court* was then in Company, the Gale then much ſtronger, the Ships obliged to croud Sail to clear the Caskets; yet this *Hampton-Court* did not then lye along, and it is ſaid becauſe ſhe was then deeper in the Water, though but a few Inches. This proves, as to the *Hampton Court*, what a Difference a few Inches made, ſuppoſing both Aſſertions true, that ſhe then was ſtiff, now crank, and what the Difference made in her between then, and now, had at leaſt this Advantage, that when ſhe had righted along-ſide of the Enemy, by ſhorning Sail, her Decks would have been in Proportion better covered, as ſhe was higher out of the Water, and the Fire of the Muskettry and great Guns blowing the Cloud upon the Enemy, both of their own Fires and Guns, would have been of no ſmall Advantage, as is evident from common Senſe, and apparent to the meaneſt Underſtanding; and as to the Enemy's having two Tier of Guns to one, requires a little further Diſquiſition. The Suppoſition that the *French* Ships ſail'd upright while ours lay along in ſo ſurprizing a manner is very difficult to be credited, and what renders it leſs ſo is the Evidence proving too much, as I ſaid before. They will have it that the Enemy had their Lee-Guns out, which, though not impoſſible, is highly improbable, becauſe of the unneceſſary Hazard by reaſon of the ſqually Weather, and having no Enemy on that Side; for as their Guns might have been equally ready without opening the

Ports,

Ports, ſo there could be no kind of Neceſſity for running them out before they were wanted, and is therefore ridiculous to ſuppoſe they were. I have ſailed in Ships of all Rank and built, yet never ſaw a Ship yet, not loaded down to her Bearings, but what heel'd conſiderably, under ſuch a Preſſure of Sail, and with ſuch a Gale of Wind, as is deſcribed in the Minutes; and if the *French* were ſo deep loaded, there will two things follow, the firſt, that their ſailing upright gave them no Advantage in Point of Velocity, as their greateſt Breadth was more in the Water, than the *Hampton court*'s who lay along, and either muſt be ſo, or would have heel'd to it, which is exactly the ſame thing; the other is, that were they ſo low in the Water, loaded down to their Bearings, and ſuch a Swell as deſcribed in the Minutes, her Lower-Deck Lee-Ports muſt neceſſarily have ſhipt much Water when open, and therefore not kept open with ſuch apparent Hazard; beſides if ſhe had ſix Hundred and eighty Men a-board, which I am well informed is not true, and much other Loading, beſides Proviſions aboard, the Lower-Gun-Deck muſt neceſſarily have been peſter'd, and her Guns rendered uſeleſs. And as it don't appear that ſhe threw any Lumber over-board, 'Tis highly probable not loaded deep, and conſequently could not be ſo extreamly ſtiff, as to ſail upright under ſuch a Preſſure, and with ſuch a Gale.

Capt. *M*——*s* may, in the Whole of this Matter, ſtill think himſelf right; but if it appears otherwiſe, he is not the firſt who has been miſtaken: And the Honour of a Military Man is of ſo nice a Nature, that did not too many Inſtances appear of the bad Conduct, or worſe, of our Naval Commanders, and the evil Effects and bad Influence, either Miſconduct or want of Courage may have on others, I had not

troubled the Publick by introducing this Affair, which altho' I think an Error in Judgment, I can't certainly say what farther Reflections it merits.

There is one Thing extreamly obvious, which is, That our Sea-Officers despise Theory too much, and by trusting only to their Genius at the Instant they are to act, have neither Time nor Foundation whereby to proceed on; their Consultations, are all in a Hurry; and by the want of either Theory or Experience, which should furnish them with a competent Number of Ideas distinct and clear, their Thoughts are puzzled, perplexed and confounded. This Neglect of Theory arises from their being imposed upon by those, who from long Experience, are capable of making a good Judgment, as far as Experience has enlarged their Understanding; but if every Sea-Officer, after the Course of a long Peace, will presume to act on the same Principles as old experienced Officers, or that the Nation until they get Experience, must be treated like poor Patients in an Hospital, only be try'd Practices on, and in the mean Time our Enemy improve their Naval Power, What shall we hazard in the Event? Not only our Power, but our Fortunes and Liberties into the Bargain. 'Tis a very easy Thing to take the Command of a Ship of War, but to execute it with Address, requires somewhat more Skill, than not only Landmen, but even our Seamen dream of: 'Tis but too evident in this as in many other Cases, how much Skill and Address (to say nothing else) is wanted in the Royal Navy, and this in a great Measure, is owing to Obstinacy and Conceit, and which is only to be amended at present by making severe Examples of those, who will neither fight, nor learn to fight their Ships with Skill. 'Tis indifferent to the Nation, whether the Commanders they employ be Knaves or Fools; If we thereby

thereby become diſhonoured, it is no Matter for the Means; the Clamour is loud for Juſtice on more than one Delinquent; the Nation demands it of their Repreſentatives, and doubt not of being obliged. The Houſe of Commons knows full as much of the Matter as the Board of Admiralty, and have much better Judges to aſſiſt them, and the Nation demands Juſtice. As there is no Body but myſelf, that either dare, know how, or will write on this Subject, that Honourable Houſe ſhall have every Aſſiſtance in my Power; I owe it to my Country as my Duty, to the King as my Allegiance, and to Honour as her Votary. Nor will I leave the Subject, until the Nation be thoroughly ſatisfied, that only ſuch Men are employ'd, who are thoroughly capable, and eſteem Life and Death as quite indifferent, when ſet in Competition with the Nation's Honour.

Sir *Edward Howard*'s Thoughts of theſe Things were, That nothing is to be effected in Maritime Affairs, but where the Officers Courage riſes even to Madneſs; ſucceſſive Times have convinced us how well he underſtood what he ſaid. The *Dutch* Wars diſplay'd it in all its bloody Colours; and ſince then we can hardly ever be ſaid to have fought in Earneſt. Our Enquiry, ſince has not been whether a Commander be bold, daring, and intrepid; but whether his Ship lay in ſuch and ſuch a Diſpoſition; what he ſaid, and ſhe ſaid; whether a Line of Battle was properly formed; and if ſuch a Signal did not repreſent this or that. All theſe are neceſſary Incidents, but are not the main Matters, nor has any one good Event happened from Fighting in Lines of Battle at all, when Officers are determined to fight in great Fleets. 'Tis much the leaſt Part of the Matter what Order they fight in, more eſpecially when they are determined to make that depend upon Accident at laſt;

which if thoroughly well purſu'd, is unavoidably connected with Science; all Formality therefore, as Matters are circumſtanced, only tends to keep the main Point out of Queſtion, and to give Knaves and Fools an Opportunity to juſtify themſelves on the Credit of Jargon and Nonſenſe, whereby they think to perplex Superiors, and get acquitted with Honour, for what they deſerve to be hang'd. The plain Queſtion is only this, if their Ships meet others of equal Force, as the Weather is the ſame for both, Did you fight or did you not? You may tell us of this or that little Advantage; its immaterial; the Honour of your Country not only requires you ſhould fight, but conquer, and for the contrary will admit of no Excuſe. We know at Sea Men of Reſolution always conquer, at almoſt any Odds; you have the beſt common Men in the World; and if you want either Courage or Conduct, we muſt find thoſe that have both; we know your beſt Conduct, when on an Equality with the Enemy, is to fight cloſe; and if your Ship is diſabled or a ſinking, you are to board the Enemy at all Hazards; you are not to tell us a *Canterbury* Tale about North and South, Courſes and Stay-ſails, Stiffneſs and Crankneſs; and when you don't know what to do with a Ship, lay the Fault on the Builder, as if our Ships were not as good as the Enemy's; when we well know on ſome bad Occaſions they prove much better. We know that if you can come up with a Ship of equal Force, you can't lie a-long ſo much more than ſhe, as to be diſabled from fighting her; a little Diſadvantage is none at all when made up by Intrepidity: Suppoſe a *Frenchman's* Sword was an Inch longer than your's, and he ſtood upon a Mole Hill, Would you therefore refuſe to fight him for ſuch a trivial Difference, and call yourſelf an *Engliſh man*? Muſt you be always exactly matched, or won't you

you fight at all? Consider how your Fore-fathers behaved; Did they refuse to fight at any Odds? And did not their Resolution conquer all before them? And at this Time of Day, when our Men are as good as ever, and our Ships better, and vastly superior in Number, Is it not the worst Politick in the World, not to destroy an inveterate Enemy in Time, before they are at Leisure to raise an equal Navy, and put it on an equal Issue, who shall enjoy the so-long contended-for Empire of the Ocean.

As the Opulence of Land-men, the Figure they make, and Dignity they appear in, depends entirely on the Preservation of our Commerce, and on the Conduct of our Fleet in general, and of our Naval Commanders in particular; Does it not equally concern them to enquire critically into the Management of our Naval Affairs with the Men in Trade? And indeed ought they not both to assist in one common Interest, and to make a Party against the Great and Powerful, who aim to dishonour the Nation, by using all their Art and Interest to protect Delinquents? Such strict Inquiry will come much too late, when the *French* have raised a Fleet nearly on a Parity with ours; and that they can do it, appears from what they have formerly done; what *Lewis* the XIV. did, *Lewis* the XV. may do; and then what a foolish Issue shall we put the bare Chance of being a Nation any longer upon?

It's better, as the Scripture says, that one Man die, than the whole World perish; and therefore concluded it necessary, that one should die. I am perswaded it's plainly necessary, rather that every one who behaves ill in the Navy, be their Interest or Relationship ever so great, be severely punished, than that our Navy be destroyed, our Nation dishonour'd, our Power despised, and our Gallantry the Jest of

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out Neighbours. What can we ſuffer more, unleſs it be a total Annihilation of our Laws, Liberties, and even of our Exiſtance.

The Honourable Houſe of Commons will excuſe me if I take the Liberty of addreſſing this directly to them: for though I doubt neither their Candor nor Judgment in ſuch Enquiries, yet I can't help doubting whether it poſſeſſes the Hearts of ſome ſo ardently, as that they will make it their ſole Study and Buſineſs to come at the Bottom of theſe Affairs. For that they may think it merits their ſole Regard, I will endeavour to lead them into ſome farther Light, juſtly concluding, that when they are thoroughly ſatisfied of the Honeſty and Clearneſs of my Intimations, that they will take their Meaſures accordingly, and like the famous Triumvirats of *Rome*, though on a better Occaſion, forget all Relationſhip, and ſeverally ſubſcribe to the Puniſhment of their deareſt Friends; ſince on that Principle alone the Fate of the Nation, and with it their own Being depends. If one Officer on ſuch Enquiry, who has behaved ill, or even not very well, is ſuffered to come off with Impunity, or what is much the ſame, with a ſlender Puniſhment, the reſt will fearleſſly follow the ſame bad Example, and then we are utterly undone.

I muſt beg Leave to tell the Honourable Houſe from very certain Knowledge, that the Scheme of the Naval Commanders is chiefly to get great Eſtates, by taking ſuch Prizes from the Enemy as are eaſily conquered; and therefore keep their Ships from the hazard of being diſabled by an Enemy of equal Force, the fundamental Principle of the ſame Scheme; and this has appeared ſo obvious in many recent Caſes as not to need Illuſtration. If thoſe who are, or have been at the Head of the Admiralty, will tell the

Truth,

Truth, the whole Truth, it will appear, that the Intereſt Sea-Officers make for particular Stations, is where moſt Prizes are to be taken, and the leaſt likelihood of meeting Ships of Force. This ariſes, principally from the Nation's ill grounded Generoſity in their Favour, by giving the Commander an Eſtate for his Share, out of every Prize he takes; and as thoſe of the leaſt Force are generally the richeſt, ſo will ſuch only, as Matters are circumſtanced, be look'd after. It is in vain to expect in theſe degenerate Times, that where a thouſand Pounds is to be got without Fighting, they will purſue imminent Hazard, merely for Honour, or a trivial Acquiſition. Daily Facts confirm this Truth, and the Reaſon of the thing ſufficiently proves it; no Nation was ever guilty of ſo notorious a Soleciſm, nor ever Nation ſo badly ſerv'd for being guilty of ſo generous an Error. The Remedy ſeems to me very plain and obvious, give every Captain of a Man of War who takes or deſtroys a Ship of his own Force, his full Share, and a thouſand Pound over; and to anſwer this without putting the Nation to any Expence, take one of the eighth Shares from all thoſe who make leſſer Captures; in the firſt Caſe he will be encouraged on the ſame Principle as he acts, on the laſt be very ſufficiently paid for doing his Duty.

I muſt only beg Leave to add, in order to clear up the chief Point in View. That if it pleaſes the Honourable Houſe to make a due Enquiry, that they will find, that neither were the *French* Ships in Queſtion mann'd as pretended, that the Parole of Honour of Mr. *Bon Chien* is not the Truth, that there was not that Difficulty in fighting them as pretended, nor are the Minutes of the Court-Martial in any Senſe Satisfactory, nor the Method of Enquiry in any Senſe properly purſued. And that if they will

please to Command this Anonymous Author to attend them, who is really a Seaman, he will think it an Honour done him, without a Fee or Reward, to put them into such a Method of Enquiry as cannot fail setting this whole Affair in a true and Satisfactory Light.

P. S. There is one Remark to be made concerning the Ship *Captain*, which is likewise a Seventy-Gun Ship: Her chasing the smallest of the Three Enemies, may (upon Enquiry) be found equally meriting Regard with the Transactions of the *Hampton-court*; and, perhaps, be the chief Reason why the Enemy was not taken.

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